

Community Preservation Act Committee (CPAC)
Meeting Minutes
Thursday, February 4, 2010

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 pm by Peter Jessop, Chair, in the Town Room at Town Hall.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Denise Barberet, John Gerber, Louis Greenbaum (arr. 7:30), Michael Jacques (arr. 7:11), Peter Jessop, Chair; Ellen Kosmer, Mary Streeter, Clerk; Vince O'Connor (absent 7:25-8:00), Vice Chair; Stan Ziomek

STAFF / OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Sonia Aldrich, Linda Chalfant (arr. 8pm), David Ziomek, Alisa Brewer, Carol Betsch, Kevin Eddings, Carol Gray, Robin Karson, Taryn Laraja, Susan Roznoy, others

Agenda

- Open Space Proposal Presentations
- Recreation Proposal Presentations
- Discussion amongst committee members on the previous proposals
- Public hearing discussion
- Approve minutes
- Adjourn

Peter welcomed everyone, and suggested we may have more questions after the presentations. The main purpose of this meeting is to hear in more detail the proposals for Open Space and Recreation.

Open Space Presentations - \$175,000+

	Conservation Commission \$175,000
\$ 25,000	Surveys and Appraisals
\$150,000	Land conservation
	Szwacz (Meadow Street) 8 acres
	Poor (Pomeroy Lane) 50 acres
	Andrews/LaVerdiere (Meadow Street) 20 acres
\$ _____	South Amherst Conservation Association
	Land purchase of Rock Farm on South East Street

Dave Ziomek gave an overview of the Open Space proposals. He distributed three 11x17" aerial photo maps of properties to be discussed.

Surveys and Appraisals are part of "due diligence" in order to get projects going. In any given year amounts from \$15,000 to \$22,000 are used. It is rare that money is spent on an appraisal that does not result in a project. Dave often tries to match CPA funds with private funds from organizations such as the Kestrel Trust. About \$17,000 is remaining from funds allocated from FY2010 after the appraisals for the currently proposed projects are paid.

Szwacz (Meadow Street) – 8 acres, \$18,000

The Szwacz property became available last Fall. It has hundreds of feet of frontage along both sides of the Mill River and is on the Town's Priority List. It has been purchased by the Kestrel Trust to be held by them for one or two years until the Town of Amherst purchases it. It is a wonderful fishing and hiking area. Denise suggested we might be able to purchase this property in one year if we lower the amount requested for appraisals to \$15,000.

Poor (Pomeroy Lane) 50 acres

This property has been on the Open Space Priority list for several years. It is an old farm adjacent to a number of conservation areas. It has significant wetland frontage along the Plum Brook. The money requested would be used for a 20% match for an Agricultural Preservation restriction, a Conservation Restriction, or possibly a Land Grant (formerly a Self-Help Grant). The appraisal done by the bank came out

at \$660,000 for the total purchase price. About 12 acres could be in APR. This could be a working farm for a family. There is a small house on the land and the soils are prime. The APR program typically reimburses \$10,000 to \$20,000 per tillable acre. We may be able to get a match higher than 80%. The northern 20 acres, a red maple swamp, could be a woodlot. Dave is looking for a farmer who may want to purchase this small farm. Dave's first choice is to APR the entire property. If that is not successful he would like to preserve the whole property by purchasing it "in fee". The property is under threat of development into approximately 6 or more house lots.

Andrews/LaVerdiere (Meadow Street)

This would be a backup property in case either of the above properties is not ready by Town Meeting. Dave will meet with CISA to explore agricultural options. A cooperative venture might happen where part of the property is developed and part is an agricultural use such as for agricultural storage or a winter farmers' market. The appraisal is \$1.5 million. A climate-controlled storage building has been approved by the Planning Board for the southern part of the property. An office building is proposed for the northern part.

South Amherst Conservation Association (SACA)

John said the Conservation Commission has listened to this proposal and is generally in favor of preserving the land, but they chose to take no action at this time because there are too many unknowns and it is not ready. They encouraged SACA to come back in the future with more details.

Carol Gray showed a map of a property on South East Street owned by Scott Nielsen. She gave a computer presentation with photos. Carol said SACA is asking that an unspecified sum of money be set aside for a future purchase. The property is under threat of development because a 17-unit development for luxury condos with 2-car garages has been approved. This land abuts the Rail Trail greenway. She is concerned about the effect of this development on species such as the Spotted and Wood Turtles and the American Bittern. Part of this land is designated as priority habitat by the Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program. The only road access to the abutting Town-owned 89-acre Brickyard Conservation Area is on this land. Dave said the appraised value is about \$850,000. Carol said the owner would like to get significantly more, perhaps double that amount for the land. There may be a way to sell one or two lots as part of a package combined with grants. SACA has raised \$47,000 in pledges. Rail Trail users, commuters, hikers, people who enjoy the views would benefit if the land is preserved. Kevin Eddings spoke in favor of preserving this land because of the adjacent Bike Trail/State Park and Brickyard Conservation Area and the vernal pool on the land. Carol asked that an amount to be determined by CPAC be set aside for the future for this project or another worthwhile project.

Recreation Presentations - \$189,666

\$150,000	Hawthorne Farm Land acquisition
\$ 39,666	Plum Brook Recreation Area (year 6 of 10)

Linda Chalfant gave an overview of the Recreation proposals. She distributed 4 maps of the Hawthorne property, a 6.76 acre parcel on East Pleasant Street near the Wildwood and Middle Schools. Before George Hawthorne passed away there were conversations with Town officials in which he expressed a willingness to sell this land to the Town for recreational purposes. Those conversations are continuing with George Hawthorne, Jr. The property is in a key location near the schools and is on a bus route. Purchasing this land would allow a field to be taken offline more frequently. It was approved unanimously by the LSSE. Other potential sources of funding could include a PARC grant or a grant from the Land and Water Conservation Fund. A price has not yet been agreed to. Louis wondered if the house could be sold separately. Dave said that Town staff has discussed renovating it and using it as affordable housing or selling it. The farmhouse is structurally sound and on .46 acres; it is appraised at \$225,000. The remaining parcel is appraised at \$190,000 and is 6.3 acres. Ellen asked about the threat of development into housing lots. Dave estimated there is room for 4 to 6 house lots. In response to Vince's question about the water table, Dave said some test pits were dug; the central land seems dry enough to accommodate a regulation sized field for sports such as ultimate, soccer, or lacrosse. The soil is mixed glacial gravel. The land would need significant grading and filling to create level fields. He stressed the importance of acquiring this property, which is in a central location.

Robin Karson of 205 East Pleasant Street asked about the market value. Dave explained that the appraised value is considered the fair market value, which is \$415,000. Taryn Laraja of 7 Strong Street said this sounds like a great plan that she hopes will work out. Susan Roznoy of 11 Strong Street commented that she is an abutter and no one has come to talk with her about this project. She asked about putting this project ahead of others. The importance of waiting until after the Public Hearing was explained. Vince asked if there were any objections to the project at this time. Denise suggested that the land be used for community gardens rather than fields; however, she did state the land should be purchased. Ellen asked how the amount of \$150,000 was determined. Dave and Linda commented that it was based on available grants and usual matching amounts. Dave said there are only 2 regulation size baseball fields in town. Vince said safe access to the area by schoolchildren is important. Carol Betsch of 205 East Pleasant Street told us about a stand of sugar maples and asked that they be preserved. She favored community gardens and suggested this may be an educational resource for children to study wetlands as well as gardening. Dave said several scenarios have been explored by staff. No guarantees about the trees or gardens can be made at this time. Linda said a multi-purpose playing field is the essential element. Vince asked for a listing of the different types of fields and their requirements. Peter commented that there did not seem to be an objection to this project going forward.

Mary asked whether any of these projects could go out to bond. Peter said Sonia is investigating this with Town Counsel. She and Denise were interested in a site visit to an affordable housing unit. Peter will organize this. A legal ad for the Public Hearing will appear in both the Gazette and Bulletin. Peter will be out of town that week, so Vince will chair the Public Hearing.

MINUTES

Motion by Stan, 2nd by Ellen to approve the minutes of **1/21/10**. **VOTED 6-0-1** (Vince abstained due to absence, Michael and Louis absent during this part of the meeting)

Motion by Stan, 2nd by John to approve the minutes of **12/17/09**. **VOTED 9-0**

Motion by Stan, 2nd by John to approve the minutes of **1/7/10**. **VOTED 9-0**

ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Mary and seconded to adjourn at 9:08 pm. Voted unanimously.

NEXT MEETINGS

Our meetings will usually occur on the third Thursday of the month from September through April. Our next meeting will be a **Public Hearing** on **February 18, 2010 at 7:00 pm** in the Town Room of Town Hall. Additional meetings are scheduled for March 18, and April 15, 2010.

DOCUMENTS DISTRIBUTED

- Agenda
- Minutes of December 17, 2009, 3 pages
- Minutes of January 7, 2009, 7 pages
- Minutes of January 21, 2009, 4 pages
- FY2011 CPA Proposals at a Glance, 1 page
- Color aerial photo maps of Szwacz (Meadow Street), Poor (Pomeroy Lane), and Andrews/ LaVerdiere (Meadow Street) properties, 11x17", 3 pages
- Packet of 4 color photo maps of Hawthorne property, 4 pages
- CPAC Questions and Answers about Open Space Projects January 31, 2010, 2 pages
- CPAC Questions – Recreation Proposal and email January 30, 2010, 4 pages
- South Amherst Conservation Association Questions and Responses, 3 pages
- Email from Donna Crabtree, February 1, 2010, 1 page

Respectfully submitted by Mary Streeter, Clerk

Approved April 1, 2010